

March 29th 2007

A Carey Sperling's Blog

I can't believe it's over already! It's Thursday March 29, 2007 and I just came back from the field for the last time on this expedition. Today, I got to dig holes. Now that sounds really hard and boring but in reality it was fun. The reason for the hole is to find out what kinds of microorganisms live in the soil at different levels. The hole had to be more than 50cm deep so that we could take a fresh soil sample every 10cm down into the hole. This was the hardest task I had to do physically this trip, and before this, I've never dug a hole that deep.

Previously in the week, I went on a general orientation trip of the Mojave Desert where we were shown all of the important Lunar and Martian analogous sites to be studied on this expedition. There were places with ancient bacterial fossils that we might possibly find on Mars, another place with a lava tube not unlike on the Moon and Mars, and places where ancient bacteria we believe to be over a billion years old still live and thrive! I also participated in the actual research by gathering up samples, taking part in scientific discussions, mapping out colonies of the primitive bacteria and yes, digging holes for scientists to take their own samples in.

Now everything was not perfect – I was in a vehicle that got a flat tire while crossing a river and we had to figure out how to get to the spare without the manual for the van. This took about an hour and in the process, those of us in the van missed out on another really incredible research location but even that was an adventure. Every day, we woke up early and worked until very late at night but when you only have 4 days to research an area as large as the Mojave desert, you have to use every spare minute you have even if that means going without a little bit of sleep. Part of me is really sorry it's over and would love to stay longer, but then there's the part that's ready for my own bed. What an incredibly awesome week!